

Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)

Writing Skill Expectations

Writing Standard

Strand 2 – This strand focuses on the elements of effective writing. Good writing instruction incorporates multiple performance objectives into an integrated experience of learning for the student. The order of concepts and performance objectives is not intended to indicate a progression or hierarchy for writing instruction. Instructional activities may focus on just one or several concepts.

The purpose of the Articulated Writing Standard is to define the skills students are expected to master in grades K – HS. The skills spiral as the grades progress, becoming more sophisticated and in-depth in their expectations. Even though the same six trait analytic scoring guide is used to assess all levels of student writing for AIMS Writing, Strand 2 identifies the particular skills appropriate at each grade level for each trait.

The descriptors for each of the six Concepts in Strand 2 are aligned with the rubric (scoring guide); however, at each grade level, the Performance Objectives delineate the specific skill expectations for that level. For example, Concept 4 (Word Choice), PO 4 at grade 3 introduces the use of literal and figurative language, noting that its use “may be inconsistent or experimental.” At grade 5, PO4 states “Use literal and figurative language where appropriate to purpose.” Following the spiraling performance objective to high school, PO4 states “Use literal and figurative language intentionally when appropriate.” Thus, as students become more skilled in writing, the expectations become more sophisticated. When PO descriptors are italicized, the skill is repeated from a lower level, but the skill should show growth in greater application complexity. Strand 2, Concept 2 (Organization), Performance Objective 4 provides an example of a repeated objective at grade levels 6 – HS: “Include effective transitions among all elements (sentences, paragraphs, ideas).”

The AIMS Writing prompts are written for each grade level to elicit responses with complexity and sophistication appropriate to that level. A prompt at grade 10 will demand a more skillful response than a prompt at grade 5. And even if the prompts were the same, a 10th grade response is expected to have greater depth than a 5th grade response. Scorers are trained to make these distinctions during training sessions which are based on “anchor” sets determined by Arizona teachers to exemplify each score point for each trait.